Over a 3-day visit, the external reviewer met with administration, art faculty and art students and toured campus classrooms, gallery spaces and studio spaces on the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo (UHH) main campus, Hawaii Community College (HCC) campus, Imiloa Astronomy Center and East Hawaii Cultural Center. The reviewer also read the 2016 self-study provided by the art department and became familiar with the UHH art curriculum. The intent of this report is to provide objective feedback on the perceived strengths and weaknesses of UH-Hilo’s art program and to suggest improvements and possible directions for growth.

Faculty and Curriculum
The reviewer was impressed with the high level of professional engagement demonstrated by the full-time faculty through their vitas, which document extensive national and international exhibition records, active grant writing, and collaborative projects within the community and with local arts organizations such as East Hawaii Cultural Center and the Makery.

Faculty members appear to be actively engaged with campus governance and seem to be highly dedicated instructors, challenging and nurturing their students as they develop as artists. The art faculty has introduced a dozen new courses in the past 6 years and mentioned some additional topics they hope to add in the near future. Student artwork displayed throughout campus and submitted to the juried annual student exhibition and the student-run art and literary magazine, Kanilehua, attests to the quality of instruction and the development of both conceptual expression and formal skills within students’ artwork. Conceptual concerns seemed to be most evident in printmaking and photography student examples, but the reviewer was pleased to see them also being discussed during the Beginning Design critique she attended.

The art department faculty is energetic and resourceful, planning for the future and seizing opportunities for students to engage in interdisciplinary coursework such as the “Cyber Canoe” project at the Imiloa Astronomy Center. They have also created exciting opportunities for students to work as assistants to nationally acclaimed visual artist through Visiting Artist Residencies and the Artist Print Edition projects. Students are also exposed to a wide range of professional artwork through the PSBN juried exhibition that the department curates. Additionally, students have been urged to attend national art conferences and art graduates have gained admittance to graduate school, thanks to faculty encouragement and the strength of the students’ portfolios.

Faculty have also made wise use of promotional opportunities by distributing postcards for the Summer Art Institute while attending professional conferences on the mainland and by producing printed catalogs of their national biennial exhibition and distributing them to entrants. These efforts help promote the UHH art department and its offerings.

The curriculum for the art major looks well planned and quite comprehensive in the 2-D arts. The scheduling is arranged in a way to allow a small number of faculty members to effectively offer wide course diversity. Art students have the benefit of having tenured
faculty teaching even the beginning level courses and studio class enrollment is capped low to allow students to get plenty of one-on-one feedback from the instructor.

Overall, students seem happy with the quality of instruction in art history and the 2-Dimensional areas of study, namely painting, photo and printmaking. They enjoy the small class size and appreciate the opportunity to learn traditional techniques like grinding paint, and making their own mediums. However, they bemoaned the lack of 3-D opportunities and access to instructors who specialize in 3-D media such as sculpture, ceramics and installation art.

Some students and faculty hope to expand the art department's offerings in Digital Media, with a fine arts focus, to differentiate it from the vocationally oriented Applied Digital Media degrees offered at other schools. The reviewer encourages the department to consider adding a certificate program in Digital Media, using the faculty resources you already have in conjunction with some of the courses HCC already offers.

The benefits of adding either a 3-D focus or a Digital focus should be weighed against the possible migration of students out of your established fine arts programs, which could reduce course enrollment if new programs are not structured and/or scheduled carefully.

Some students and faculty expressed concerns that the department chair seems to be taking on too much work, chairing two departments and teaching what appears to be a full load of classes. One student said the department chair sometimes had to miss part of class to attend to administrative obligations.

**Recommendation:**

1. Department chair should request/accept a course reassignment to allow him to lighten his teaching load and prevent burn-out. Department chair position should be an elected position that could be renewed every two or three years, and there should be an opportunity for all faculty in the department to evaluate the chair and offer feedback on an annual or bi-annual basis, if that is not already happening.

2. Department and administration should consider expanding the teaching pool to include someone with advanced degree and expertise in 3-D areas. This person would teach the beginning and intermediate 3-D Design courses and possibly expand the curriculum, if enrollment and the faculty support the idea, to include more 3-D options at the upper division level.

3. Faculty should consider adding a Digital Media Minor or certificate program.

4. Add a senior capstone experience course that would cover professional concerns such as interviewing, writing artist statements, artwork presentation, hanging and promoting an exhibition, grant writing, applying to graduate schools, etc.

5. Consider creating a position of part time gallery director, through course reassignment or hiring, to manage the numerous art exhibitions on campus,
oversee the Pacific States Biennial Exhibition, and perhaps teach a gallery course or provide student internship opportunities in Gallery management.

6. Begin discussion of whether or not the department wants to eventually develop a BFA offering. Consider impacts on faculty size, teaching load, course hour requirements, and studio space limitations.

7. Begin discussion of whether NASAD accreditation is desired by both the faculty and administration. If interested in pursuing accreditation, conduct a preliminary site visit by a NASAD accredditor to identify potential programmatic and facilities issues that might impact accreditation.

Facilities
The classroom spaces in UCB that the reviewer visited on the UHH campus seem adequate for the types of classes held there (Art History, UCB 113 and Introduction Digital Media, UCB125). The art studio spaces on the HCC campus, however, are deficient in serious ways:

MC 394-1&2: This space houses drawing, photography, and design classes, and has insufficient ventilation and air conditioning. The doors and windows must be covered with dark curtains to control lighting and provide privacy for nude models but this, along with the hot spot lights, makes the working environment unbearably hot for students and instructors, especially in summer. Peeling paint on the ceilings is likely to contain lead, based on the age of the building, which creates a toxic environment for faculty and students alike. Lead testing should be performed in all HCC buildings of similar age and condition.

Reviewer did not have a chance to see MC394-3 or -7 but believes it is critical to have climate control in any class where chemicals and paper are involved, such as “wet” photography, papermaking, cyanotypes, and printmaking. This prevents mildew from developing on stored artwork and allows chemical processes to perform reliably, resulting in higher quality art production and student satisfaction.

MC 389: Several painting students who provided feedback to the reviewer expressed frustration and strong dissatisfaction with the crowded and hazardous conditions of the painting studio space. This area, located adjacent to the noisy physical plant, had no active ventilation system, and was crowded with used filing cabinets and other cast-off equipment and furniture. There was limited space for the Beginning Painting students to work and there were no fire extinguishers readily located, in the event of fire caused by combustible oil painting solvents and mediums. The lighting in any art studio should be color-balanced for nighttime studio use, for hue accuracy. This is especially important in a painting studio.

MC 395: The printmaking studio is well equipped with presses, large format printer, rollers, exposure unit, a dedicated solvent room and acid room. However, the electrical wiring is insufficient to support the hotplates, rosin oven, plate exposure unit and other electrical appliances in use. The ventilation hood in the solvent room should be relocated directly above the parts washer, between the user’s face and the solvent. The emergency shower in the acid room is not plumbed to a drain, so when it is used, water spills all over the floor, damaging the linoleum tiles and any equipment or materials stored near floor level.
The printmaking archive room located in MC395 was recently subjected to a termite infestation that destroyed a valuable stack of prints produced by a nationally acclaimed visiting artist. This building has old louvered glass windows and a portable A/C window unit that allowed termites to enter, despite attempts to keep that room sealed tight.

Students and faculty have opportunities to exhibit their work on the UHH campus in numerous locations, including the Dean’s office, the Mo’okini library, and hallways in the Campus Center. They also have acquired exhibition venues in the community. Furthermore, the art department mats and frames dozens of work for the Pacific States Biennial National juried exhibition that it hosts. Despite this active exhibition schedule, there is no delegated gallery director or space dedicated to receive and ship artwork, mat and frame student work, or store pedestals and gallery equipment.

Students complained about having the art department studio spaces located on HCC’s campus, rather than on the main UH-Hilo campus. This separation causes difficulties getting back and forth between classes, especially for those students without cars who have to carry materials and large portfolios between the two campuses.

External reviewer noted that UHH art students are not assessed a studio materials fee and are required individually to buy materials that could be much more affordable if purchased in bulk by the professor, such as inks and specialty printing plates. A materials fee could have the added benefits of allowing students to use financial aid to cover the cost of some supplies, instead of having to pay for them out of pocket and it would allow instructors to have supplies on hand the first day of class, instead of having to wait for students to order and receive materials from the mainland.

**Recommendations:**

1. Provide adequate ventilation, climate control (a/c and dehumidifier), insect control, and color-balanced lighting in all studio spaces to facilitate art production, preserve archive collection, and improve recruitment and retention of art students and faculty.

2. Work to relocate art studios to main campus. This will give the art dept. a more visible presence on campus, improve art students’ daily commute from class to class, and make it easier to move artwork from studios to UHH gallery exhibition spaces.

3. Improve ventilation hood in printmaking solvent room and repair plumbing to emergency shower in printmaking acid room.

4. Test for air quality and lead paint in all HCC studios with peeling paint and make sure fire supression equipment is easily located in all studios that use flammable materials.

5. Consider replacing solvents and mediums containing VOCs with safer alternatives (e.g. replace solvent in parts washer with mineral oil, use acrylic hard grounds in place of turpentine-based grounds, use walnut oil as oil paint solvent).
6. Provide a designated climate-controlled space for gallery exhibition preparation: matting and framing work; storing glass, mat board, frames, mat cutters and pedestal; packing boxes and shipping supplies, etc.

7. If the department does decide to expand its 3-D offerings, make sure there is safety training for all students using power tools or woodworking saws, welders, casting equipment, etc. The sculpture area should also be proper staffed by experienced equipment operators.

8. Reviewer suggests considering implementing studio fees for some or all studio classes.

Respectfully Submitted:

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